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Mrs Tina Connell  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Connell

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Joseph's Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 27 March 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that lower-ability pupils in key stage 1, and those new to English, get off to a strong start in reading and writing by:
  - making sure that phonics teaching is matched to what pupils need to learn next to build their knowledge and skills to become confident and fluent readers
  - making sure that pupils' reading books are phonetically decodable so that pupils can successfully apply the sounds they have learned in phonics sessions to their reading
  - giving pupils lots of opportunities to use the sounds they have learned to write new words and sentences independently.

- refine leaders' checks on teaching and learning so that they are centred on the different progress that pupils are making in the areas prioritised for school improvement.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher, middle leaders and the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I spoke to the local authority school improvement partner on the telephone. I visited lessons with you and we looked at pupils' work. I met with the subject leaders for reading, writing and mathematics. I spoke to pupils in lessons and heard five key stage 1 pupils read. I considered the school improvement plan and self-evaluation documents. I met you, as the designated safeguarding lead, and office staff to check safeguarding documents and procedures.

## **Context**

A new teacher and middle leader has been appointed, which has settled the turbulence in teaching and learning in key stage 2 seen at the time of the last inspection. Governance has been further strengthened: many governors were very new to their roles at the time of the last inspection. Recently, the deputy headteacher has been seconded to another school for two days each week.

## **Main findings**

School leaders have plans for school improvement that are clear, concise and well understood by staff and governors. You have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The good and effective overall leadership seen at the last inspection is directing improvement in teaching and learning effectively.

Staff members' and governors' understanding of the progress that pupils make over time has improved. Knowing that teaching, learning and assessment needed improvement, leaders make timely checks on the quality of teaching and learning. They report this back to governors. However, all leaders do not consistently report their checks in terms of the progress pupils are making, or note the difference in teaching and learning for pupils making stronger or weaker progress.

Teaching and learning in key stage 2, particularly in writing and mathematics, was highlighted for improvement at the last inspection. Settled staffing arrangements since June 2018 for pupils in lower key stage 2 have made a positive difference. Current pupils' work and conversations with pupils show that adults model writing and mathematics effectively and support pupils in building their knowledge and skills well over time.

During my visit, lower key stage 2 pupils of all abilities were confidently writing a newspaper report about a three-headed monster seen in New York. They quickly

got to work because they had been equipped, in previous lessons, with the knowledge of how to write an effective report, information about New York and examples of the high-quality vocabulary choices they might make.

Pupils' current work in mathematics shows a careful balance of practice to aid fluency in number with problem-solving opportunities. Leaders have identified that they need to continue to ensure that pupils are challenged further with tasks to develop their reasoning skills and have plans in place to address this.

The good start children make in the early years identified at the last inspection continues. For example, during my visit children were drawing on the adults' good modelling in vocabulary and story-telling to delight in a number of role-play and writing activities based on 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff'. Leaders know that they need to keep the progress that these children are making high on their radar: the children had unavoidable classroom disruption because of flood damage when they joined the school.

Phonics teaching in key stage 1 generally meets the needs of middle- and higher-ability pupils. Observations of their engagement and success in phonics lessons and the application of phonics in their written work demonstrate this. However, lower-ability pupils lack confidence in lessons and find reading very difficult.

Phonics teaching for lower-ability pupils, or those who enter the school with little or no English, does not cater for the fact that they do not yet know all of the initial sounds. Pupils behave well, and try hard, but they follow a process rather than understanding and building on their learning. The books they are given to read do not correspond with their learning in phonics. The books are not phonetically decodable and pupils' attempts to use picture cues are not supporting them with the skills they need to successfully decode new words. Leaders have just started to invest in phonics books.

Pupils in key stage 2 are eager to discuss some of the texts they are enjoying together in class. They talk about books that they choose to read and a range of different authors. However, although key stage 1 pupils read aloud regularly, they find it difficult to recall favourite books or authors.

Governance is strong. Governors bring a wide variety of different skills and backgrounds to the table that they use well to question school leaders about the actions they are taking for improvement. Newly implemented systems for checking the progress that pupils are making and succinct reports from school leaders have resulted in governors having a very good understanding of the pupils that are making strong progress and the pupils that need further support.

Governors use detailed information provided by you alongside external reports and their visits to the school to inform their work. They value the partnerships with the local authority and other schools and can explain the benefits that this work brings

to the pupils.

The school is currently providing support for a school in the Bishop Konstant Catholic Academy Trust, with the two-day secondment of the deputy headteacher. Leaders know that this arrangement needs to be managed very carefully, so that the pupils at St Joseph's continue to make the strong progress seen more recently. This is particularly important as this cohort of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils includes some vulnerable pupils who made slow progress earlier in key stage 2.

### **External support**

The school has used a variety of external support effectively to contribute to their school improvement journey. Leaders value the clear, supportive conversations with representatives from the local authority, who have an accurate view of the school. They can demonstrate how the brokered support from St Anthony's Catholic Primary Teaching School has been particularly effective in improving teaching and learning. Work with the local authority has included: ensuring that pupils of all abilities have appropriate challenge in their learning; the moderation of pupils' work in English and mathematics in each class; and work to strengthen the wider curriculum alongside dedication to improving pupils' progress in English and mathematics.

School leaders and governors continue to look at ways of using their connections with other schools and trusts to inform their direction for improvement to staff.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Leeds (RC), the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for East Riding of Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kate Rowley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**